DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 711 CE 027 229

AUTHOR Jax, Judy
TITLE A Comparative Analysis: The Meaning of Home Economics.
PUB DATE Dec 80
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Vocational Association (New Orleans, LA, December 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; *Componential Analysis; *Definitions; Economics; Education; Elementary Secondary Education; Family (Sociological Unit); *Home Economics; Politics; Postsecondary Education; Religion

ABSTRACT

The 1899-1908 Lake Placid Conferences' definition of home economics as a professional field of study was compared to the 1979 meaning in Home Economics: A Definition, a paper by Brown and Paolucci, to provide clarity and future direction for the field. A componential analysis was conducted with the following domains: family, religion, politics, economics, education, purpose of home economics, presuppositions, conceptual structure of knowledge, and mode of inquiry. Societal conditions, especially the institutions of family and economics, were found to have a profound effect on the meaning of home economics. Family was the central unit of society influencing all other societal institutions. Religion had a greater significance in the earlier time period. There was emphasis on the reciprocal effect between family and politics. Economics was seen as an extremely powerful influence on people's lives. The conceptual structure of knowledge was to be concerned with practical problems in regard to family. The mode of inquiry was to incorporate ways to gain knowledge from varied disciplines to answer practical problems of home and family. The meaning of home economics was consistent in the conferences and in the paper. (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED195711

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: THE MEANING OF HOME ECONOMICS

By
Judy Jax
Assistant Professor
Department of Human Development, Family Living &
Community Educational Services
University of Wisconsin-Stout

For
American Vocational Association's
Annual Conference
New Orleans, Louisiana
December, 1980

CE 027 229

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Judy A. Jax

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (EPIC)."

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compare the meaning of home economics as a professional field of study found in the 1899-1908 Lake Placid Conferences to the 1979 meaning of home economics in Home Economics: A Definition to provide clarity and future direction for the field of home economics. It was believed that the Lake Placid Conference papers represented a historical referent point from which the future field of home economics might be based. In contrast, the 1979 Brown and Paolucci paper was selected as being the most comtemporary perception of home economics. Objectives of the study were:

1. To determine the conceptual meaning of home economics as a professional field of study as reflected by the participants of the 1899-1908 Lake Placid Conferences.
2. To determine the influence societal institutions may have had on the meaning of home economics at the time of the 1899-1908 Lake Placid Conferences.
3. To determine the conceptual meaning of home economics as a professional field of study as reflected in Home Economics: A Definition.
4. To determine the influence societal institutions of 1979 may have had on the meaning of home economics as reflected in the writings of Home Economics: A Definition.
5. To compare the conceptual meaning of home economics as a professional field of study by the participants of the 1899-1908 Lake Placid Conferences with that of the authors of Home Economics: A Definition.
6. To compare the influence of societal institutions of the times on the conceptual meaning of home economics as reflected in the writings of the participants of the Lake Placid Conferences and the authors of Home Economics: A Definition.

In this study, the assigning of meaning was viewed as a human activity created and represented through the use of symbols. Language or verbal symbols were considered the primary medium used to transmit meaning among human beings. The task was to uncover semantic systems of symbols which gave meaning to home economics as found in two classic occurrences.

Literature Review

The papers were read and a review of literature was conducted. The first section of the literature review illustrated the confused status of home economics currently existing and the need to have some agreement or meaning within the field. In the next section, the influence of societal institutions (family, religion, politics, economics, and education) on the meanings people have in life were explored. Being that home economics was believed to be a professional field of study in the Lake Placid Conferences and in Home Economics: A Definition, dimensions of any professional field of study (purpose, presuppositions, conceptual structure of knowledge, and mode of inquiry) were examined. Finally, literature was reviewed as to determine an appropriate scientific research perspective to use in determining the meaning of home economics contained in the documents under study.

Research Methodology and Procedures

In order to facilitate a comparative analysis between the Lake Placid Conference papers and the Brown/Paolucci paper, interpretive science as a scientific research perspective was chosen. Logical empiricism and critical science were considered inappropriate scientific perspectives for purposes of this study. Ethno-

graphic research techniques, drawn from the field of anthropology provided a means of identifying and classifying the "meaning" of concepts as derived from written material. Specifically, ethnoscience procedures were utilized.

A componential analysis was conducted with the following domains: (a) family, (b) religion, (c) politics, (d) economics, (e) education, (f) purpose of home economics, (g) presuppositions, (h) conceptual structure of knowledge, and (i) mode of inquiry. Matrices were then developed to facilitate comparison of the data. One matrix contained a conceptualization of data in regard to the Lake Placid Conferences and another a conceptualization of the data in regard to Home Economics: A Definition.

Findings

The Lake Placid Conferences' Matrix indicated that societal conditions of the 1899-1908 historical period influenced the founding and consequently the meaning of home economics. Family was considered the central unit of society and it was perceived to be in a state of deteriorization. The development of a sense of religious consciousness in people was considered essential. There was recognition that forces needed to be discovered which would lead to cooperation between family and politics. Economics was perceived as a determinant of human conditions within families. The role of education was to better societal conditions by performing roles families were no longer performing. These impacts of societal institutions had a profound affect on the meaning of home economics.

The purpose of home economics evolved out of the recognized deteriorization of human life in society. Presuppositions for

the field were drawn from the basic value positions in regard to societal institutions. The conceptual structure of knowledge was to provide a means to teach family responsibility within the present and future society. The field was to use theoretical knowledge from chemistry, physics, physiology, economics, biology, sociology, hygiene, history and art and through the use of philosophy apply it to practical ends in society. The mode of inquiry was to discover the forces necessary for creating a wholesome home and family life.

Data on the Home Economics: A Definition matrix also indicated that 1979 societal conditions influenced the meaning of home economics. The institution which formed society, known as family, was believed to be deteriorating in providing the necessary human function of self formation. People were not seen as accepting responsibility from religion for their own morality. Politics reflected the deteriorated state of people's thinking and choices while economics reinforced ideals contrary to sane self formation and freedom. Education in the professional fields was viewed as being in a state of deterioration. Thus, society was considered to be in a deplorable state.

The purpose of home economics evolved out of the recognized condition of people's thinking, choices and ideals in society. Again, presuppositions for the field could be drawn from basic value positions in regard to societal institutions. The conceptual structure of knowledge for field was to be of a reflective nature to ethically influence social character.

An appropriate mode of inquiry was to provide knowledge to help society out of its deteriorated state.

To facilitate a comparative analysis between the Lake Placid Conferences' Matrix and the Home Economics: A Definition matrix, two further matrices were used.

In comparing societal institutions within both time periods, family was the central unit of society influencing all other societal institutions. The institution of religion was not responsible in itself for people's morality. However, in the earlier time period there was greater emphasis on the significance of this institution. There was emphasis on the reciprocal effect between family and politics. Economics was seen as an extremely powerful influence on the lives of people. Lastly, professionals in home economics had responsibility to educate future professionals to perform the societal role of strengthening the institution of family.

A further matrix compared the field's professional dimensions during each time period. Again, these dimensions proved to be similar.

In both cases, the purpose of home economics was to aid home and family in their ability to develop ethical and free human beings who are conscious participants in the betterment of societal conditions. There was also agreement on the following presuppositions as being representative of the field of home economics:

1. Man gets meaning in life through interrelationships in society.
2. Man has a free will and is capable of making choices.
3. Man is self-forming.
4. Physical and social environment can be transformed through the action of man.

5. Man must assume responsibility in society.
6. Man desires freedom once it is known.
7. The societal institutions give meaning to life.
8. Social change may or may not be good.
9. Family is the primary caregiver of children.
10. Home and family is a basic human institution.

Brown and Paolucci did not recognize the monogamic family as being the best form of family as did the Lake Placid Conference proceedings.

Both positions agreed that the conceptual structure of knowledge was to be concerned with practical problems in regard to family. This necessitated the use of practical reasoning and ethical judgement making. Both also agreed that theoretic knowledge from several disciplines was required to answer the field's problems.

In both instances, the mode of inquiry was to incorporate ways to gain knowledge from these varied disciplines in order that the practical problems of home and family might be answered. There was agreement that more than one type of inquiry was needed. Empirical ~~inquiry~~, social science ~~inquiry~~, and philosophical inquiry were mentioned in the Lake Placid Conferences. Brown and Paolucci emphasized these three types of inquiry but,referred to them as parts of critical science.

In conclusion, the meaning of home economics as a professional field of study in the Lake Placid Conferences was consistent with the meaning of home economics as a professional field of study in Home Economics: A Definition.

Wide spectrum inference was used to gain insight into the field of home economics. This process involved putting data into the context of a higher level and then illustrating the connections. Points to be summarized as a result of applying this process included:

1. If members of the field had accepted and practiced the meaning of home economics as indicated in either set of papers, families would be assuming a stronger role in society.
2. The practice of home economics is applicable only in free societies given the purpose of home economics.
3. There is a strong need for home economists to recognize their role in the political process. This role is to develop strong systems of action within families so families can influence the institution of politics by their social nature to create social conditions which enhance desired family values.
4. Home economics is not a discipline; it is a professional field of study built upon several disciplines. It is a distinct field in education at the university or college level.
5. The name home economics is the appropriate name to designate wholeness of a professional field of study.
6. Before unity can occur in home economics, professionals must agree upon the practical problems which should be foundational for study within the field.

This study provides direction for future unity in home economics.